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PSC PRAISES FCC AUCTION OF PORTION OF WIRELESS SPECTRUM

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission praised the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for including the concerns of rural regions in a recent auction of part of the wireless spectrum.

The Nebraska Commission, along with its counterparts in Maine, North Dakota, and Vermont, said provisions providing multiple licenses in a state for one license group and requiring successful bidders to meet stiff build-out requirements will result in more service to rural communities.

The auction was made possible when the FCC determined that a portion of the wireless spectrum previously reserved for television channels 52-69 would not be needed following the 2009 national conversion to high definition broadcasting.

Nebraska and the other three states successfully influenced the FCC to require winning bidders to accelerate the deployment of wireless services or they may lose their right to use that frequency. The states also asked carriers to expand service in rural unserved markets and urged them to make available unused frequencies “to entrepreneurs and innovators willing to try new technologies and business models, as well as to state-sponsored initiatives, which are chartered to spur service in unserved areas.”

“There are still communities that are waiting for wireless services,” the Nebraska Commission said. “We appreciate that the FCC acknowledged that we need to do more for our communities.”

The states said the auction will help expand the availability of wireless services where it may not currently exist if the FCC vigorously pursues its build-out requirements. Some states are taking action to address this pressing need, providing financial and other forms of assistance and offering public-private partnerships such as the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund to facilitate the development of wireless infrastructure with the goal of ensuring that all parts of their states have access to needed services.

“What we need are partners in the community of licensees who hold spectrum: big companies and small companies, but most of all companies who share the desire to

provide service even in the less populated parts of the areas in which they are licensed,”
the states said.

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